

River Valley Therapeutic Residence Policy and Procedure		
Visitors		
Effective: 4/28/2023	Revised: 10/10/2023	Due to Review: 10/10/2025

POLICY

The River Valley Therapeutic Residence (RVTR) recognizes the invaluable therapeutic benefit to recovery and community re-entry of an individual's friends, family, and other community supports. RVTR has developed a procedure that hopes to maximize these benefits while maintaining a safe and therapeutic environment for residents and staff.

DEFINITIONS

Visitor: A facility visitor is defined as any individual who cannot access the facility using their own issued identification badge and keys.

PROCEDUREVisitors:

- Guests/Visitors are welcome at River Valley Therapeutic Residence (RVTR); however, there are times when visitation may be limited. RVTR asks that all visitors be considerate of other residents when visiting. Residents are encouraged to notify staff of planned visits in advance, so as to provide meaningful time together with their visitor/s without disruption. However, due to limited space at the residence, some limitations may apply. All residents have the right to refuse or decline a visit or visitor at any time without explanation. Staff will assist with this if needed.

Visiting hours:

- RVTR encourages visitation from friends and family, however, there may be times when visitation is limited due to treatment related meetings (*e.g.*, treatment planning, physician meetings, other related meetings). RVTR also asks that there are no visitors at the residence before 8:00 AM or after 8:00 PM. Exceptions to the visiting hours may be made by the nurse or designee.
- Staff should be notified in advance of any visit.

Visiting the Unit:

- Visitors shall generally enter the residence through the main entrance. Alternate access points may be arranged to meet safety and operational needs (*i.e.*, emergency personnel, maintenance, or delivery personnel).
- RVTR personnel shall maintain the confidentiality of RVTR residents consistent with applicable RVTR policy and procedures and HIPAA. All visitors who may access the resident care area or who may be exposed to, or become privy to, resident identifying information must sign the *VISITOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT REGARDING RESIDENT RIGHTS TO PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY* form.
- Personnel welcoming visitors shall confirm whom the visitor intends to visit, verify a government issued form of identification (ID), document required information in accordance with the *RVTR Visitor's Sign-In Log*, and complete the acknowledgement form (if not completed before).
 - Should a visitor not have an ID, the Program Director or designee may, at their sole discretion, allow entry without photo identification.
- Personnel welcoming visitors shall conduct a safety search prior to visitor entry – see APPENDIX A for detailed safety guidance for conducting visitor safety searches.
- Lockers are available in the main entrance for visitors to store all non-essential items in during their visit. Any items brought in by visitors will be screened by staff. Please refer to the *Restricted Items and Search Policy*. Staff will document the visitor's locker number on the *Visitor's Locker Log*.
- Staff shall inspect any bag or item that is to be brought to the residence. Staff will ask that any restricted items be left in the check-in area or returned to their vehicle.
- Visitors will be asked to leave all personal items except for car keys in their vehicles or in the RVTR locker. Visitors may only bring their car keys, food, or gifts for residents into the building.
- Food and gifts must be checked in with staff and staff will determine whether they may be given to the resident and in what quantity. Items determined to be restricted shall be kept in the nursing station lockers for either treatment team review or return to the visitor upon leaving the facility.
- If staff is uncertain about any item, questions shall be referred to the nurse or designee.
- Any items that will remain with the resident will be inventoried on the Resident Property List.
- The nurse or designee will escort the visitor to the visiting area.
- No visits are to occur in a resident's room.
- Visits may occur in any common area of the facility with approval from the charge nurse or designee so as to maintain respect for fellow residents and facility

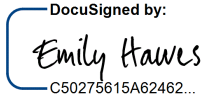
activities.

- There will be no more than four visitors per resident at the same time. Exceptions to the number of visitors may be made by the nurse or designee.
- Residents may receive visits from anyone unless the treatment team decides otherwise, and the reason is documented in the medical record. In addition, visits with certain individuals may be prohibited by court order.
- Residents have the right to refuse visitors.
- Individuals who appear to be under the influence of alcohol or other substances, or who are using loud, abusive, or vulgar language may be denied permission to enter RVTR. Individuals who engage in behavior deemed to be disruptive before or during a resident visit may be asked to leave the facility.
- All visitors will be scanned with a metal detector before entering the facility. The Program Director or designee is authorized to waive the scanning requirement. Individuals will also be asked to empty their pockets to ensure that they are not bringing in restricted items. If individuals refuse these procedures, staff may deny their entrance to RVTR.
- When a person has been denied permission to enter the facility, or if a visit has been ended based on an individual’s unacceptable conduct, staff shall notify the Program Director or designee, and shall document in the Visitor Log the reason the individual was denied entry or asked to leave.

Visitor’s Under the Age of 18

- Visits by children under the age of 18 must be pre-approved by the residents’ treatment team and Program Director or Designee. These visits will be limited to one hour. Any approved visitor under the age of 18 must be accompanied and always supervised by a parent or guardian. RVTR staff will not be responsible for supervising visiting children.
- Visits by children under the age of 18 may occur in the gymnasium or on the front patio and must have a 2:1 staff to resident ratio.

In an emergency or other situation that calls for a rapid decision, the Program Director or designee may approve immediate access to the facility on a case-by-case basis.

Approved by	Signature	Date
Emily Hawes Commissioner Vermont Department of Mental Health		10/11/2023

Appendix A

Personnel Guidelines for Conducting a Visitor Safety Search

- Visitor safety searches consist of dialogue with visitors about facility safety, security, and restricted items that visitors may have with them as well as metal detection.
- Visitor safety searches shall be conducted in the first vestibule of the main facility entrance.
- All visitor safety searches shall be completed by a minimum of one staff with a second staff as witness in the reception area. Visitor safety searches may occur with both staff in the first vestibule if deemed necessary for safety reasons. RVTR personnel shall maintain certification in Professional Adult Crisis Training (ProACT) to sustain the skills necessary to evaluate the level of safety situations may present based on an individuals' verbal and non-verbal cues.
 - If personnel is uncomfortable with carrying out the steps of a visitor safety search due to safety concerns (i.e., visitor is angry, confrontational, confused, threatening, etc.) they should NOT enter the vestibule with the visitor and should inform the nurse or designee, or any on duty administrator for assistance in managing the situation.
 - If personnel is in the vestibule and a threat becomes evident, they should excuse themselves, vacate the area, and notify the nurse or designee.
 - If a visitor does not consent to the safety search, assigned personnel shall remove themselves from the vestibule to notify the nurse or designee. The visitor may be denied access to the hospital until either the person consents to the safety search or the program director or designee personally reviews the situation and makes a determination.
 - To conduct a visitor safety search, assigned personnel shall verbally review applicable RVTR safety process and inquire if the visitor may have items with them that would not be safe to bring into the facility (*See the Restricted Items Policy for further details*)
 - Lockers are available for any visitor items that are not authorized.
- The search would then proceed to visual examination of contents of containers, bags, boxes, pockets, or other containers that a visitor intends to be brought into the facility.
- Visitors and items entering the facility are then metal detected. If the metal detector alerts, the assigned personnel shall ask the visitor to make the item visible or may ask for consent to visualize the area/contents in question.
 - If a visitor does not consent to search or to reveal an item that the metal detector alerted to, assigned personnel shall vacate the vestibule and notify the nurse or designee.

- The visitor may be denied access to the facility until such time as either the search is completed, or the Program Director or designee personally reviews the situation and makes a determination about the safety of proceeding with a visit.
- If/when contraband/restricted items are found and not perceived as an immediate threat, personnel shall explain RVTR's Restricted Items policy and ask the visitor(s) to either return their items to their vehicle or secure the items in one of the vestibule lockers.
- If a staff member finds a weapon in the person's possession, the personnel member shall leave the potential visitor in the outer entrance area and access a safe location to call the nurse or designee and/or emergency responders.
- Assigned personnel welcoming visitors shall inform direct care personnel of any items intended for the direct care areas. If the visitor asks to visit the facility or the resident before assigned personnel can complete search of items intended for the resident, the assigned personnel may leave these items in the reception area lockers. When the assigned personnel is available, they shall return to the Reception area to continue the search and determine which, if any, items are suitable to bring to the direct care area.
- The Nurse or designee shall conduct a second review and inventory of these items. The Nurse or designee shall complete the second review process in a timely manner and shall make every effort to complete the review before the visitor departs so items can be taken back with them as necessary.

Note: Personnel shall contact the on-duty nurse with any questions regarding visitors and/or compliance with this policy.